THE RAGTIMER

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

1969

PUBLISHED BY

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE
PRESERVATION OF
CLASSICAL RAGTIME

NEW RELEASE FROM

arpeggio

THE MUSIC OF JOE JORDAN
BY LOIS DELANO

At the writing of these notes, Joe Jordan of Tacoma, Washington, is eighty-six years old. Though his continuing involvement with music through the years has often made him reluctant to reminisce about ragtime and popular music around the turn of the century, his interest in preserving and further popularizing his own compositions of that era is displayed in this record. Played by Mr. Jordan's friend and pupil, Lois Delano, also of Tacoma, the selections date from 1902 through the 1920's, and mirror both the composer's personal skill in the ragtime style, and his involvement with several phases of popular music of that era.

It was Joe Jordan's involvement with writing, arranging, performing, and conducting, and the many fellow musicians with whom he has worked through the years that have made him an historically important figure. His prominence, beginning at least by 1900, is revealed best by his prolific musical output: rags, ragtime songs, instrumental compositions for all types of ensembles, show tunes, scores for silent movies, moving up through World War II songs to the present, when Joe continues to compose and arrange.

It would appear that Jordan's skill as an arranger and conductor kept him involved with notable musicians and groups throughout the Ragtime Era, and provided a vehicle for many of his own compositions. Quite notable, for instance, was Jordan's position as musical director of the Pekin Theater - the first all-Negro operation of its kind - in Chicago around 1904. As such, he composed and arranged music and productions, as well as directed the orchestra at this significant landmark in Negro show business. Joe's later association with James Reese Europe and his orchestra, as arranger and assistant conductor, brought him further prominence. Also notable were groups which Jordan himself organized, among them the 'Memphis Students' - a touring ensemble of singers, dancers, and instrumentalists - begun in 1905, and later, his 'Ten Sharps and Flats'- a full-scale band, with both of which he toured the States and Europe. It would seem most fortunate that a man of Joe Jordan's interest and stature in the world of ragtime and other popular forms, working for years behind and before the public spotlight, has a sizable number of compositions to his name which can be presented as an authentic record of the style of composition and performance of the day.

Miss Lois Delano, playing Jordan's compositions on this recording, heightened her enthusiasm for the lore of ragtime by becoming a student of Joe's a few years ago. With considerable skill and ardent zeal, she assimilated a large number of the compositions and much of the style of her teacher, working both from published music and unpublished manuscripts, under (by her own admission) the rather exacting eye of Mr. Jordan.

It is with confidence, therefore, that we can present these selections as authentic musical documents, as well as fine performances.

- DAN GRINSTEAD

ARPEGGIO RECORDS wishes to extend special thanks to both JOHNNY MADDOX and DAN GRINSTEAD, who generously contributed to the production of this album

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joe jordan

the music of

by lois delano

arpeggio

arpeggio ARP-1205

THE SELECTIONS - -

DOUBLE FUDGE - a piano rag, written in 1902.

NAPPY LEE - originally a band composition, written in 1903 and inspired by the "nappy-haired" trombone player in a group for which Jordan composed.

J. J. J. - another piano rag, from 1905.

PEKIN RAG - one of Jordan's compositions for the orchestra performing at the Pekin Theater in Chicago where he was musical director. This rag is from 1904.

THE DARKEY TODALO - a piano rag from 1906.

THAT TEASIN' RAG - a song, and perhaps Jordan's best known composition, written in 1909. The listener may recognize the melody of the third strain as having been lifted by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band a few years later, in their composition, 'Original Dixieland One-Step.' For this performance, Miss Delano adds two special ragged versions of the trio, not in the sheet music, arranged for her by the composer.

LOVEY JOE - a song, with words by Will Marion Cook, written in 1910. It was this composition, written specifically for Fanny Brice at the suggestion of Flo Ziegfeld (for whom Jordan was working at that time), that brought her stardom overnight and made her a permanent star of the Follies.

CORSICA - a song from 1915.

MOROCCO BLUES - an instrumental number written about 1920. The composer's band, 'The Ten Sharps and Flats,' recorded this piece shortly after it was written.

TANGO RAG - also an instrumental number, from 1913. It may be noted that CORSICA, MOROCCO BLUES, and this piece all show evidence, in subject matter and musical style, of the composer's travels and awareness of the appeal of international "flavor" in popular music.

WHIPPOORWILL RAG - a piano rag.

HALF AND HALF - from about 1915, written for the popular 5/4 meter dance craze of that period.

I'M GOING TO EXIT - from 1905. A spoof song about a crap game.

Cover Design by Anne Arpin

THOSE RAGTIME YEARS 1910

This was the year during which the world lost a renowned author and humorist in the death of Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens). His writings about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn associate with the sounds of Ragtime in remembering the last century and particularly, the bustling activities along the Mississippi and its tributaries.

These were the days of the large 5¢ schooner of beer, the chewing tobacco plug, the brass spitoon, the potted palm and the new-fangled nickel and dime stores. On July 4th, 1910, Jack Johnson knocked out Jim Jeffries in a fifteen round fight at Reno, and became the heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

Scott Joplin was now living in New York where he and his second wife, Lottie, operated a boarding house. They favored transient musicians and theatrical artists as their boarders. This was the kind of boarder who was as welcome when out of work as he was when staying with the Joplins as a paying guest. Scott Joplin was giving music lessons to his pupils with patient attention despite his preference to get on with his composing efforts. He was busy, in fact, during this year putting the final touches on his three act opera "Treemonisha" which he himself published the following year. The result was that Scott produced only one published ragtime composition in 1910 called "Stoptime Rag".

George Botsford, in this year, collaborated with Irving Berlin in bringing out the "Grizzly Bear" rag in song form for public consumption. This song had an obvious influence in popularizing the Grizzly Bear dance craze (as you may have read, the dance partners hugged each other with both arms, in the manner of bears, and then rocked from side to side in step with the beat of the music).

William Howard Taft was President of the United States of America. The U. S. population had moved beyond 90 million persons. In 1910 the Union of South Africa was formed with a population of one and a quarter million whites and four and a half million colored people. The crowned heads of Europe were shaken somewhat by the revolution in the kingdom of Portugal which resulted in the dethronement of King Manuel II and the proclamation of a republic. In Britain King Edward VII, the peacemaker, died and was succeeded by his son, George V. It was a year of great labor unrest and of woman suffrage agitation in the British nation. In Canada, Liberal Sir Wilfred Laurier who became Prime Minister in 1896 still Continued in the same high office.

Edmund Halley, an English astronomer, saw a great comet in the sky about the year 1683. He decided it was a periodic comet and therefore the same one that had apparently been noticed during the years 1531 and 1607. The comet, taking his name, became known as Halley's Comet and has since faithfully visited our particular part of the universe every 75 3/4 years (i. e. 1759, 1835, and again in this our Ragtime Year of 1910). Because of the appearance in this year, Harry J. Lincoln's latest composition acquired the name "Halley's Comet Rag".

The Ziegfeld Follies of 1910 presented to the public newly acquired stars for the first time - Bert Williams of the already popular team of Williams and Walker and a new discovery in the person of Fanny Brice. Joe Jordan's "Lovie Joe" was written that year especially for Miss Brice.

John Philip Sousa, now at the peak of his career, took his 100 man band on a grand concert tour of the world. The tour lasted for more than a year. He had done much to popularize cakewalk music, in Europe during earlier tours and here on the American continent. Perhaps it could be said that Sousa became a ragtimer unintentionally.

A Canadian by the name of Shelton Brooks who had been born at Amesburg in Ontario obtained his introduction to Tin Pan Alley with his composition "Some of These Days". Brooks was then 24 years of age. The song was later performed at White City Park in Chicago by Sophie Tucker and it remained a trade mark song for the balance of her life. Shelton Brooks' greatest hit "Darktown Strutters Ball" did not put in its appearance until some five years later.

Jelly Roll Morton was one of the leading 'professors' of Storyville. He was currently working as a regular solo pianist at Tom Anderson's Annex in the Storyville district of New Orleans. A pianist had to be the best to work for Tom Anderson. In fact, Anderson was said to be the political boss and unofficial mayor of the district.

In 1910 the great Victor Herbert was enjoying his greatest New York triumph with his light opera "Naughty Marietta". This operetta included "I'm Falling In Love With Someone", "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life", as well as "Italian Street Song". It was the year of Albert Von Tilzer's great success with Junie McCree's lyrics "Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey, Hold Me Tight". This was the year in which "Play That Barber Shop Chord" appeared, written by MacDonald, Tracey and Lewis Muir. Copyright problems have since kept this harmonic gem in seclusion for too many years. There were many other hit songs that year - "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", "On Rag-Mobile Bay", Tell Taylor's 'Down By The Old Mill Stream" and Ford Dabney's "That's Why They Call Me 'Shine'"

But it was a year that belonged to Ragtime. Five Classic ragtime compositions from leading ragtime composers were unveiled in 1910. James Scott gave us "Ophelia Rag", "Grace and Beauty" and "Hilarity Rag". Joseph Lamb produced "Champagne Rag" and George Botsford, in addition to his collaboration with Irving Berlin, came out with "Chatterbox Rag". Joe Jordan contributed 'The Darkey Todalo" as well as his already m ntioned song "Lovie Joe" in collaboration with Will Marion Cook. Henry Lodge came up with "Red Pepper - A Spicy Rag". J Russel Robinson added to the list with "Dynamite Rag". There were countless other rags introduced in this year - 1910. Some of the better known ones are "Chanticleer Rag" by Albert Gumble, "Chile Sauce Rag" by H. A. Fischler, "The Entertainer"s Rag" by Jay Roberts, and Mike Bernard's "That Ticklin' Rag".

While the war clouds were not too far away the decade that started with the year 1910 began in the high spirits of its booming musical craze - Ragtime.

RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

PEARL PLP-6, Frank Amacker "The Dude", playing piano or guitar (selections marked *), with vocals (selections marked #).

Selections: The House Got Red, Improvised Rag, Jelly Roll Blues, Modulation Rag, La Paloma, Watermelon Trust, See You In My Dreams#, Impossible Myself, Birmingham Blues, Naked Dance, Fast Rag, Saddest Blues#, Gettysburg March*, Liebestraum*, What A Night In Old Mexico*, If I Ever Cry#, Let Them Make Their Living Blues.

The traditional jazz and ragtime revival that began in the early 1940's stimulated substantial interest in the pioneers of the music. Many of these veterans were located, brought out of retirement, and recorded for the first time.

Quite often, time had taken its inevitable toll on the abilities of the musicians concerned. Bunk Johnson's fabled trumpet tone had apparently faded somewhat, and a tired lip forced him to drop out of some ensemble choruses; Joseph Lamb's hearing had dimmed to the point where he was no longer able to hear and correct some audible mistakes in his piano playing. Consequently, their records require a certain amount of charity on the listener's part and, in any event, cannot be considered as representing fairly the abilities they had in earlier days when, unhappily, they were not recorded.

Nevertheless, the recordings of Johnson, Lamb, Brun Campbell, and other rediscovered veterans of the early days of jazz and ragtime are important records, and not only for their historical value. These men had retained enough skill and spirit to create performances of lasting musical value; despite the occasional clinkers, Johnson's band had a zestful, integrated group sound characteristic of the best traditional jazz, and Lamb's piano had an honesty and grace that did justice to his excellent ragtime compositions.

As time passes, any rediscovered veterans from the ragtime years are going to be even more elderly, and less likely to be able to play with their former abilities. Such appears to be the case with Frank Amacker, who, it seems, played piano in the sporting houses of Storyville with Jelly Roll Morton and Tony Jackson. This Lp, presumably his first recording, was not made until the summer of 1965 and requires a larger dose of charity on the listener's part than is usual for this type of recording.

Amacker tends to be repetitive - - perhaps the result of inspiration fading with the years. In any event, many of his performances alternate between the dominant and tonic chords for twelve bars of each strain before resolving in the last four bars. He also tends to lengthen the the individual performances with too many repeats. And his execution, as may be expected of an inactive pianist of advanced age, is rather on the crude side.

On the other hand, this Lp does offer some support for a claim that Amacker was, at one time, a talented New Orleans pianist. His playing is clearly related to Jelly Roll Morton's, possibly by direct influence, or maybe because they both had similar roots. Amacker's performance of "La Paloma", in particular, is an enjoyable track which conjures up shades of Jelly Roll's performance of the same tune. His little piece "Impossible Myself", played just with the left hand, is prefaced by an anecdote, which applies to many Storyville pianists, telling how Amacker worked up this tune as a device to use in cutting contests with other 'professors'.

Moreover, some of the tracks are quite pleasant and show a real melodic skill. "Modulation Rag", a two-strain number, would be good ragtime by any standard, with some strong left-hand runs in the first strain. The best track, "Watermelon Trust", combines, in a graceful and effective manner, an opening strain that sounds like a rough draft of Jelly Roll's "Frog-I-More Rag" with a delicate second strain based on descending figures. And "If I Ever Cry", sung in Amacker's thin, light voice, is a fine sentimental ballad characteristic of the ragtime years, merging a good set of heart-rending words with a lilting, rhythmic melody.

Amacker also performs three instrumental numbers on the guitar. Speaking as someone who can play the piano but not the guitar, I'd say Amacker is a better guitarist than pianist, but it doesn't sound as if his guitar playing contains anything of particular historical importance.

Inasmuch as the musical quality of this Lp is uneven at best, it would be easier to evaluate the record if more information were given as to Amacker's background and place in the history of the music. The liner notes consist of barely 250 words, mostly paraphrasing Amacker's spoken remarks on the Lp - - and those anecdotes are more colorful than really informative. One would have hoped that a record which obviously has more current appeal for its historical than musical value would be accompanied by the results of fairly complete research on the artist. Perhaps, if Amacker is still alive, someone might be interested in gathering and publishing some information about him.

From an overall viewpoint, this Lp is one for the more historically-minded ragtimers. For anyone else, I'd be willing to say that there is a fair amount of worthwhile music on the record and, if you don't expect too much of it, you might enjoy it.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO MEMBERS IN THE BUFFALO AREA

A special ragtime series, edited by Ragtime Society member ELI KAUFMAN, can be heard on radio station WBFO - FM (88.1), Buffalo every Wednesday evening from 11-11:30 p. m. Eli is doing some fine work and The Ragtime Society salutes him for his contribution to the preservation of ragtime music. The program incidentally is entitled - Ragtime and Banjo and should be of interest to all members who are fortunate enough to pull in this station. Eli tells us that he is trying to get a radio network interested in the show. We wish him every success in his efforts.

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN - appearing at the Sutton Place Hotel (Stop 33), Bay and Wellesley in Toronto between 5:30 and 8:00 p. m. ; also, at Ports of Call between the hours of 9:00 p. m. and 1 a. m. (as of March 31).

DON BURNS - appearing in Hamburg, New York.

BOB DARCH - appearing at the Chinook Hotel in Yakima, Washington (as of January 23, 1969.

BOB DURST - appearing at the Windjammer in Cincinatti for twelve weeks beginning January 13, 1969.

JOHNNY MADDOX - appearing at the Red Slipper in Denver, Colorado starting March 10, 1969.

KEN MAYHERCY (RAGTIME $ BILL) - appearing at "The Gallery" in Steamboat Springs, Colorado till April, 1969.

MAX MORATH - appearing at the Jan Hus Theatre, 351 E. 74th St. in New York.

WALLY ROSE - appearing at the Gold Dust Lounge, 247 Powell St. in San Francisco.

LOWELL SCHREYER - at Michael's Gay 90's restaurant (banjoist) - Saturday nights in Mankato, Minn. (Lowell has been there for seven years.)

BOB SEELY - at Charlie Brown's in Detroit, Michigan.

RALPH SUTTON - at Sunnie's in Aspen, Colorado.

TREBOR TICHENOR and THE ST. LOUIS RAGTIMERS - can be heard on the Goldenrod Showboat in St. Louis, Missouri.

TEX WYNDHAM - at Tyler's Restaurant, 1101 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Del. with his own band - The Red Lion Jazz Band.

Performers, keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear on this page.

HALLEY'S COMET

RAG

By
HARRY J. LINCOLN
Composer of
RAG-BAG RAG
POVERTY RAG
A SOUTHERN DREAM WALTZES
FIRE DRILL MARCH TWO STEP
PLAYMATES MARCH TWO STEP
ETC. ETC. ETC.

FOR MORE SHEET MUSIC SUCH AS OLD AND RARE SHEET MUSIC